

## To the Okehampton Town Council.

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### Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health, 1909.

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GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of submitting to you my Twenty-second Annual Report as Medical Officer of Health.

As was the case last year, I will deal with the subject matter of the Report by following out in detail the headings as given in the *Memorandum as to Annual Reports of Medical Officers of Health* sent out by the Local Government Board. Although this will necessitate a repetition of portions of previous Reports, it has the advantage of making the subject matter more complete.

Okehampton is a small market town placed on the north-western fringe of Dartmoor, and near the centre of the county of Devon. The main portion of the town (and the older) lies in a valley, through which two rapid streams (the East and West Okement) flow as they course northward to unite just below the town.

Geologically, the older part of the town is built on an old river bed, which is made up of water-worn stones and gravel, with one or two patches of clay. The newer portion of the town is creeping out of the valley, mainly in the direction of Dartmoor, and so rests on carboniferous rocks, which dip mainly in a northern direction.

The **Area** of the Borough is 502 Acres, but during recent years many houses have been erected just beyond the Borough bounds, and as these houses receive their water from the Borough supply and drain into the Borough sewers it is very probable that the area will be enlarged.

**Population.**—At the census of 1901 this was 2568. It is now estimated at 2900, the figure given in my three previous Reports. I do not think that the population has increased during the past four years.

As regards the occupation of the inhabitants, most follow the usual employments of a small agricultural town. Over 100 men are employed by the Railway for the purpose of working a quarry some three miles from the town, and a boot factory affords occupation for several hands.

**House Accommodation.**—This may be looked upon as adequate, and most of the cottages have been built during recent years and satisfy modern requirements as to structure, air space, drainage, etc. The cottages and their surroundings are generally in a clean and wholesome state.

A few old cottages still remain, mainly in one or two courts. These are far from satisfactory, and do not provide for through to through ventilation. I think we are within measurable distance of the time when one, at least, of these courts will be removed. An improvement could be effected by cementing the court yards after the removal of the existing pebbles, but the only true remedy would be to remove the houses.

No action is needed under the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

**Water Supply.**—This is the same as last year, and is derived from (1) a stream on Dartmoor—The Redaven, and (2) springs and subsoil water also from the moor. The water is soft and of excellent purity as a rule, but after heavy rains, especially in the autumn, it becomes discoloured from peaty vegetable matter. This is only partially removed by filtration, but apparently has no deleterious effect on the public health, although the water during that period is liable to take up a small amount of lead from the supply pipes. I have never been able to trace definite injury from this cause though, due probably, as I have previously pointed out, to the fact that the plumbo solvent action of the water is intermittent and not constant.

Complaints were received during the later summer months of scarcity of supply in the higher parts of the town. The actual amount of water reaching the reservoir was found to be lower than usual, but not low enough to account for the shortage. The Borough Surveyor, after careful examination, was able to locate a large leak in the main in Station Road. This was at once rectified, and no further complaints of shortness of supply were heard. There is no doubt that there is a very large amount of waste of water going on, which, during the greater part of the year, is not felt, but in the summer (when water is low and the expenditure greater from an influx of visitors and an increased use of water for various purposes) more care should be exercised. Our supply is ample for our needs, but during the summer months we cannot afford to waste.

**Milk Supply.**—The general character of the milk as it leaves the cow is good, but in cases brought under my notice during the year there has been evidence that in some instances there is not sufficient care taken in keeping the supply pure and wholesome. Milk is one of our most valuable articles of food, but is particularly prone to undergo deleterious changes if even a small amount of filth is allowed to find entry. Greater care is therefore required in the act of milking, in the cleanliness of the vessels in which milk is collected and stored, and in its distribution.

As so many children are now reared on cows' milk, the necessity of the strictest cleanliness is accentuated.

**Dairies.**—These on the whole are in very fair condition, but I would suggest that the vessels containing the milk should be kept covered by a washable covering, to prevent the entrance of flies, etc.



**Cowsheds.**—Although some of these are in a satisfactory state, there are two or three which certainly fall far short of what they ought to be. The Town Council should take the necessary action to remedy them.

Inspection of the cowsheds and dairies of purveyors who live outside the town, but supply milk inside, is made by the Sanitary Inspector and myself.

**Food Supply.**—No instance of unsonnd food has been brought under my notice during the year, nor have I seen any on my inspections of the markets and slaughter houses. As mentioned in previous reports, it is rare to find any of the carcasses affected with tubercle. Local veterinary surgeons remark on the freedom from the disease.

There are four slaughter houses in the Borough. One recently constructed is satisfactory, the other three are indifferent. I would suggest that they be treated as we have treated those in the Rural District, by either cementing or galvanizing the walls for a height of six feet.

Inspections are sometimes made at the time of slaughtering. The Sanitary Inspector has not a special certificate in meat inspection.

No action has been taken under the Sale of Foods and Drugs Acts.

**Bakehouses.**—These are regularly inspected. On the whole they are in a satisfactory state structurally, and are regularly lime washed.

**Sewerage and Drainage.**—The town is adequately sewered, the sewers being of comparatively modern construction, ventilated, and automatically flushed. The work of removing any accumulation of gravel, etc., has been continued during the year.

**Sewage Disposal.**—The complaints as to nuisance and pollution of the river Okement at our sewage field have been more numerous this year, but the Town Council had already adopted a scheme for remedying the matter, and had made application to the Local Government Board for a loan to carry it out. An enquiry has been held, and we are now awaiting the verdict of the Board above. If satisfactory, the work is to be taken in hand at an early date.

**Scavenging.**—This work is carried on by the public scavengers, who daily visit most parts of the town.

My previous recommendation to use galvanized ash bins with a cover has been more generally adopted, as also the advice as to removal earlier in the day.

There has been a distinct improvement during the year.

No complaint as to the refuse depot has reached me during the year.

**Nuisances.**—These are kept well in abeyance, the chief cause for complaint being the too long leaving of stable manure: even in this, though, there is a great improvement.

The lane at the back of Station Road, which has been a source of complaint in previous reports, has been kept cleaner during the year. It still requires looking up though.

There is no common lodging-house in the Borough, nor are there any offensive trades carried on.

**Schools.**—A new secondary school is to be erected during the coming year. This will diminish the present overcrowding in the girls' school.

The schools are inspected at intervals. The boys' school is satisfactory except for the roughness of the playground. The girls' school is overcrowded, and the sanitary accommodation is considered to be too near the school. This the County Council intends to remedy.

**Infectious Disease.**—Cases on notification are visited by the Medical Officer of Health, and enquiries made as to the source of the disease. Directions are given to prevent spread, and where necessary disinfectants are supplied.

Disinfection is carried out on the termination of the case, either sulphur dioxide or formaldehyde being used.

**Tuberculosis.**—Four cases have been notified by the Poor Law Medical Officer during the year, three were in the Workhouse Infirmary, and the other was sent to a Sanatorium.

Infected houses are disinfected.

**Factories and Workshops.**—Inspections are made by the Sanitary Inspector and myself. I have found no cause for complaint during the year.

**Inspections.**—These are carried out by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, sometimes together. In most parts of the town house to house inspections are made.

**Water Examinations.**—Our water has been analysed twice during the year, on both occasions the result was satisfactory. I have also made inspections of our gathering ground.

**Artillery Camp.**—As usual, I made arrangements with the Medical Officer in charge of troops to let me know if any serious illness occurred at the Camp, I, on my part, notifying any case that may occur in the Town.

The health of the troops was very satisfactory during the year, no case of infectious disease occurred, and there was extremely little general sickness, although the number of soldiers was larger than previously.

**Zymotic Disease.**—I am pleased to report that the list of infectious disease was a small one, consisting only of:—

Scarlet Fever 2; Erysipelas 1.

**Scarlet Fever.**—The two cases of scarlet fever occurred within twenty-four hours of each other, one in a boy attending the elementary school, and one in a servant girl who came with visitors to the town. The cases were nearly half-a-mile apart, and nothing in common could be traced—the milk supply was different, and their laundry different. I visited the boys' school, but could find no other suspicious case. The servant girl was removed to Exeter Sanatorium by ambulance. Both of the cases were very mild. Disinfection was carried out.

For the tenth year in succession I have to report that no case of diphtheria or enteric fever has been notified.

It was not found necessary to close any of the schools during the year.



## VITAL STATISTICS.

Population at census, 1901	.	...	2568.
Population (estimated) 1909	...	...	2900.

**Births.**—71 births were registered during the year, 41 males and 30 females. Of these four males and 1 female were born in the Workhouse. The birth rate for the year is 24·4 per 1000 of the population. Last year (1908) it was 27·9 per 1000.

**Illegitimate Births.**—Only one illegitimate birth occurred in the Borough, but all of the births in the Workhouse were illegitimate.

**Deaths.**—There were 36 deaths in the Borough, 26 males and 10 females.

In the Workhouse there were 12 deaths, 7 males and 5 females, but 9 of these were of persons from the Rural District or beyond.

The death rate for the year (including visitors and the deaths of persons from the Borough in the Workhouse) is 13·4 per 1000. This is higher than the rate (9·6 per 1000) in 1908, and higher also than the average rate for the previous ten years. This is probably unimportant, as small populations show “ups and downs” more readily than larger populations do.

**Age at Death.**—Under 1 year of age there were 6 deaths in the Borough and 2 in the Workhouse, giving a rate of 112 per 1000 births. This is rather below the average.

The Zymotic death rate is nil.

**Pulmonary Tuberculosis.**—There were 7 deaths from this disease, but 2 of them were in persons who came from outside the district (Plymouth and London). Two of the deaths occurred in the Workhouse.

**Cancer** caused 2 deaths.

**Bronchitis.**—8 deaths were due to this disease, 2 in infancy.

**Heart Disease.**—There were 5 deaths.

No death was caused by accident or suicide.

Appended is the report of the Borough Surveyor (Mr. F. J. Worden), and the usual tables of the Local Government Board.

To General Holley my thanks are due for supplying me with the usual rain-fall figures; also to the Town Clerk for his great help during the year.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**EDWARD H. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H.,**

Okehampton,  
Jan. 7th. 1910.

Med. Officer of Health.

TOWN HALL,

December 31st, 1909.

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TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
FOR THE  
BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON.

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Dear Sir,

I beg to send you my general report on sanitary work for the past year.

**Water Supply.**—Taking the whole year through, the water supply has been very satisfactory, and the complaints have been confined to those occupiers of houses on the higher levels on a few occasions during the dry days in the summer, when the springs are naturally yielding less water, and there is at the same time an excessive draft in the lower parts of the town.

As to quantity, I find that even in the dry times an amount equal to over forty gallons per head per day has passed out of the service reservoir to the town.

The filter beds have been looked after, and are working as well as can be expected.

The old supply in the western park has also been attended to, and much of the spring water previously running to waste has been turned into the collecting pipes.

The wash-out valves at the “dead ends” of mains have been provided as recommended last year.

**Sewage Disposal.**—This remains up to the present in much the same condition as past years, but the Council have gone forward in the matter of the sewage outfall.

An enquiry has been held into the Council's application for sanction to borrow £4300 for such works, and the matter is now in the hands of the Local Government Board Inspector, from whom the Council expect a reply very shortly.

It is then proposed to carry on the work forthwith, in accordance with the scheme which was shortly described in my last annual report.

The sewers in various parts of the town have been cleansed and repaired, and the flushing from the valves and tanks is regularly done.

**Refuse Collection.**—The scavenging and refuse collection has been carried on in much the same way as last year, and the Council have issued notices requiring all occupiers of houses to provide properly covered bins.

There is a great improvement in this respect, but all have not yet complied with the notice.

The question of a refuse depot is still unsettled, and the Council find a difficulty in obtaining a suitable site.

**Cowsheds and Dairies.**—These are periodically inspected, and some improvement has been made structurally, but still more remains to be done in this respect.

Notices have been given to purveyors of milk, and twelve have registered themselves as required.

**Workshops, Bakeries and Slaughterhouses** are kept under supervision. Notices for lime washing have been given.

One new slaughterhouse has been occupied.

Two new workshops have been occupied.

One bakery opened in St. James's Street.

No proceedings have been necessary to enforce regulations.

**Plans.**—Plans have been approved for the erection of—

Twelve houses, shops and cottages.

Five workshop factories, and stables and dining-room.

Two street improvement and widening lines.

Two sites for public urinals have been approved.

One plan for extension of Borough boundary is under consideration.

One plan for school building and one for a dining-room rejected.

**FRAS. J. WORDEN,**

Okehampton.

Inspector.

## RAINFALL FOR 1909.

Taken by MAJOR-GENERAL E. H. HOLLEY, at Oaklands.

Diameter of funnel ... 5 inches.

Height of top above ground ... 1 foot.

Height above sea level ... 500 feet.

MONTH.	Total Depth.	Greatest fall in 24 hours.		No. of days with .01 or more recorded
	INCHES.	DEPTH	DATE.	
JANUARY ...	3.12	.47	10th	16
FEBRUARY ...	.71	.50	9th	4
MARCH ...	6.94	1.85	8th	24
APRIL ...	3.50	.68	22nd	14
MAY ...	1.99	.39	25th	5
JUNE ...	2.81	.65	3rd	13
JULY ...	2.65	.74	9th	16
AUGUST ...	2.17	.56	24th	10
SEPTEMBER	1.63	.29	4th	12
OCTOBER ...	8.53	1.72	15th	27
NOVEMBER ...	2.16	.63	29th	11
DECEMBER ...	7.17	1.35	21st	21

Total rainfall ... 43.38 inches.

Day of greatest fall (1.85) ... March 8th.

Days on which .01 or more fell 173.



Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1909 and previous Years.

Name of District ... Okehampton Urban.

Year	Population estimated to middle of each Year	Births		Total Deaths registered in the District.				Deaths of Non-registered residents in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents registered in Public Institutions beyond the District.	Net Deaths at all ages belonging to the District.		
		Number	Rate	Under 1 Year of Age		At all Ages.				Number	Rate	
				Number	Rate per 1000 Births registered	Number	Rate					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1899	2450	68	27.7	11	161.7	55	22.4	20	17	0	38	15.5
1900	2500	63	25.2	6	95.2	39	15.6	6	5	0	34	13.6
1901	2580	63	24.4	8	127.0	39	15.1	7	5	0	34	13.1
1902	2600	73	28.8	10	136.9	41	15.7	11	7	0	34	13.0
1903	2600	54	20.7	2	37.0	21	8.0	5	5	0	16	6.1
1904	2660	67	25.1	9	134.3	35	13.1	7	6	1	30	11.2
1905	2660	55	20.6	11	200.0	47	17.6	10	7	1	41	15.3
1906	2900	60	20.6	6	100.0	49	16.9	7	7	0	42	14.4
1907	2900	64	22.0	10	156.0	52	17.9	9	9	0	43	14.8
1908	2900	81	27.9	9	111.0	37	12.7	11	9	0	28	9.6
Averages for years 1899-1908	2675	64.8	24.3	8.2	125.9	41	15.5	9.3	7.7	.2	34	12.6
1909	2900	71	24.4	8	112.0	48	16.5	12	9	0	39	13.4

Area of District in Acres } 502.  
(exclusive of area covered by water) ... }  
Total population at all ages ... } 2568 }  
Number of inhabited houses ... } 524 }  
Average number of persons per house ... } 4.8 } 1901.

Institutions within the District receiving sick and infirm persons from outside the District—Union Workhouse.

## Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1909.

Name of District ... Okehampton Urban.

Notifiable Disease.	Cases notified in whole District.			
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.		
		5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.
Erysipelas ...	1			1
Scarlet Fever ...	2	1	1	
Totals ...	3	1	1	1

Number of Cases removed to Exeter Isolation Hospital, 1.

## Causes of, and Ages at, Death during the Year 1909.

Name of District ... Okehampton Urban.

Causes of Death.	Deaths at the subjoined ages of Residents, whether occurring in or beyond the District.						Total Deaths whether of Residents or Non-Residents in Public Institutions in the District.
	All Ages	Under 1 Year	1 and under 5	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ...	7			2	5		2
Cancer, (malignant diseases) ...	2				1	1	
Bronchitis ...	8	2	1		3	2	1
Pneumonia ...	2				2		2
Alcoholism, Cirrhosis of Liver ...	1				1		
Premature Birth ...	2	2					
Heart Diseases ...	5					5	1
All other causes ...	12	2			2	8	6
All causes ...	39	6	1	2	14	16	12

## INFANTILE MORTALITY DURING THE YEAR 1909.

Deaths from stated Causes in Weeks and Months  
under One Year of Age.

CAUSE OF DEATH.		Under 1 Wk.	1-2 Weeks.	2-3 Weeks.	3-4 Weeks.	Total under 1 Month.	2-3 Months.	3-4 Months.	5-6 Months.	7-8 Months.	Total deaths under 1 Year.
All Causes	Certified ... 8	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	8
	Uncertified ... 0										
Premature Birth	...	1		1		2					2
Congenital Defects	...						1				1
Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus			1			1					1
Convulsions	...				1	1		1			2
Bronchitis	...								1	1	2
		1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	8

District of Okehampton (Urban).

Population (estimated to middle of 1909)	...	...	2900.
Births in the year, legitimate	...	...	65.
do. illegitimate	...	...	6.
Deaths in the year of legitimate infants	...	...	5.
do. illegitimate infants	...	...	3.
Deaths from all causes at all ages	...	...	48.



Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1909, for the  
Urban District of Okehampton, on the administration of the Factory  
and Workshop Act, 1901, in connection with

## **Factories, Workshops, Workplaces and Homework.**

### **1. INSPECTION.**

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises.	Number of Inspections.
<b>Factories</b> ... .. (Including Factory Laundries)	2
<b>Workshops</b> ... .. (Including Workshop Laundries)	18
Total ... ..	20

### **2. DEFECTS FOUND.**

None.